

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 513  
By Fitzhugh

A RESOLUTION to designate a certain route in Haywood County as the "A.H. Gray / C.A. Rawls By-Pass".

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges to honor those exemplary citizens who, during their lifetimes, contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation is nearing completion of a 3.5 mile by-pass in Haywood County; this by-pass will connect State Route 19 with Anderson Avenue in Brownsville; and

WHEREAS, this by-pass will greatly benefit all Haywood Countians in the years to come by alleviating congested traffic throughout the City of Brownsville; and

WHEREAS, the Haywood County Commission has expressed a desire to name this vital traffic artery in honor and memory of two late citizens who worked tirelessly to improve the qualify of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, both Alexander Herbert Gray and Charles Allen Rawls are fondly remembered as stellar gentlemen who sought to improve the economic base and promote better race relations in Haywood County; and

WHEREAS, Alexander Herbert Gray was an astute attorney and a staunch Democrat who was active politically throughout his career; he served adroitly as a delegate to the 1956 National Democratic Convention; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gray served his fellow Tennesseans with acumen and industry as Director of the State Pardon Board, the first administrative attorney for the Department of Labor under Governor Gordon Browning, and as a member of Governor Henry Horton's Department of Revenue; and

WHEREAS, he distinguished himself as a proficient public servant of Haywood County throughout his meritorious tenure as County Attorney; and

WHEREAS, he represented the good people of Haywood and Fayette Counties with probity and integrity as a member of the state Senate during two non-consecutive terms in 1929 and 1949; and

WHEREAS, he was instrumental in securing a truck-weighing station for Brownsville and Haywood County and a pumping station for Dancyville; and

WHEREAS, this exemplary attorney served as President of the Haywood County Bar Association, and as the attorney for the L&N Railroad for fifty years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gray proudly served his country as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces in France during World War I and served with distinction as Vice Commander of the American Legion, Department of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, as one of eleven children, Charles Allen Rawls learned at a very young age the value of hard work, discipline and sharing; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls was a mortician and funeral director who founded Rawls Funeral Home of Brownsville in 1934; and

WHEREAS, this distinguished public servant established the Service Sundry Drug Store and employed the first African-American pharmacist in Haywood County at the store; he also operated the GEM Theatre, the first African-American movie house; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls founded the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association and, by 1940, total membership had reached a peak of 50,000 members; and

WHEREAS, in 1950, the Sons and Daughters of the Golden Circle was organized by Mr. Rawls, and in 1958, the Golden Circle Life Insurance Co. was formed and operated in Brownsville, Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, as a result of Mr. Rawls' astute leadership and business acumen, the Golden Circle Life Insurance Co. ranked among the top 100 African-American-owned companies in the nation by 1987; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls served astutely as a Board Director of the Brownsville Bank and was designated a Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls was a dreamer who possessed the willpower, endurance and strong community support to make his dreams a reality; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls' legacy of outstanding community service and commitment to improving race relations still lives on today in the hearts and minds of his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily concurs with the Haywood County Commission's proposal to name the new by-pass to honor the respective memories of these two fine gentlemen who sacrificed personal concerns to perpetuate the greater good; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That in commemoration of two lives of purpose, commitment and accomplishment, the new by-pass in Haywood County that connects State Route 19 with Anderson Avenue in the City of Brownsville is hereby designated as the "A.H. Gray / C.A. Rawls By-Pass".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such route as the "A.H. Gray / C.A. Rawls By-Pass".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Transportation and to the Haywood County Commission.

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